



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

CONTACT: Barb Sanem
Department of Commerce
Travel Montana
406-841-2769

Marissa Kozel
Montana Department of Commerce
406-841-2772

**Nominations Requested for Montana's Tourism Awards
-- Deadline is March 6, 2009 --**

(HELENA) – The Governor's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) is accepting nominations for the 2009 Montana Tourism Awards. Nominations for Tourism Person of the Year, Tourism Community of the Year, Tourism Event of the Year and Tourism Partnership of the Year will be accepted.

"Travel and tourism continues to be an important cog in Montana's economic wheel and it is the hardworking and creative Montanans within this industry that continue to propel its success," said Governor Brian Schweitzer.

Commerce Director Anthony Preite encourages the submittal of nominations to formally recognize those that work diligently on behalf of Montana's tourism industry.

"These awards recognize individuals, events, communities and partnerships whose efforts to promote or develop Montana's tourism opportunities, this year or for a series of years, have preserved or enhanced tourism's role in Montana's economy," said Preite.

The award winners will be announced at the 35th Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation scheduled for March 30-31, 2009, at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena, Montana.

Nomination forms are available from the Department of Commerce - Travel Montana by calling Barb Sanem at 406-841-2769 or e-mail bsanem@mt.gov. The forms are also available electronically at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/awards.asp. The deadline for nominations is 5 p.m. March 6, 2009.

The 2008 award winners included Tourism Person of the Year Marysue Costello of West Yellowstone. The Fort Benton Summer Celebration was awarded Tourism Event of the Year and the West Yellowstone Winter Trails won Tourism Partnership of the Year.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2007, 10.7 million people visited Montana spending over \$3 billion during their stay. Over 44,830 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal income for Montana residents.

###